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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, March 13, continue to focus on Iraq developments, in particular reports of a new British "6-point plan" to disarm Iraq and avoid war.

Editorial Commentaries

-- "The American mother of all bombs"

Columnist Mohammad Amayreh writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/13): "A weird discrepancy and strange contradiction exists in the world, because those who actually own the lethal and genuine weapons of mass destruction are coming to Iraq to disarm it of weapons they claim have mass destruction capabilities.. They want us to believe that their upcoming 'picnic' is in our best interest, to defend people, to set new rules for democracy, freedom, justice and human rights, and to relieve the Iraqi people of the rule of Saddam Hussein. They want us to believe that the 'thief' is the 'protector'. If they are really concerned, then where is their stand towards the Palestinian people? Why do they ignore Sharon's daily crimes and allow him to do whatever he wants with this unarmed people? What happened to their promises of resolving the Palestinian issue? In fact, where is the 'roadmap' that they set up, and why are they not here protecting the Palestinian people?"

-- "We do not hate anyone, but."

Daily columnist Musa Hawamdeh writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/13): "In dialogues and discussions about the Arabs and the West, the Arab interlocutor always ends up with the sudden question: why do you hate us? This issue does not require dialogues or seminars. The facts on the ground prove the aggressiveness, even brutality, of the other [the West] towards us. It is not a matter of love or hate, but a defense of the self, of existence and being. When the United States stands with all its might in support of Israel, and rallies its armies and fleets to strike Iraq, while Bush describes this strike as indispensable because it stops Iraq from threatening Israel, then it is not about love or hate. It is about resisting or surrendering."

-- "Iraqi opposition or American colonization?"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (03/13): "Are we eventually going to end up contemplating that it might be better for Iraq's territorial unity and peace among the Iraqis if there is an American governor, not an Iraqi one, in place in the initial stages that follow the regime change? It is a regretful question with a regretful answer, particularly if we take into consideration the welfare of the Iraqi people, their security and their life and Iraq's unity. We are not going to get carried away in thinking about issues after the war, because the main idea here is to prevent the war itself. However, seeing the Iraqi opposition makes us afraid of what these ill-intentioned people who are filled with a spirit of hate and vengeance might do. The people of Iraq, of course, deserve a better future, but the Iraqi opposition, with its current formation cannot be the right replacement.. It is a moral disaster for us to reach a stage where we think that a temporary American military administration would be better for the Iraqi people than the complications of the opposition or the desires of Arab and Muslim neighboring countries. We say this regretfully but

also candidly and frankly."
GNEHM